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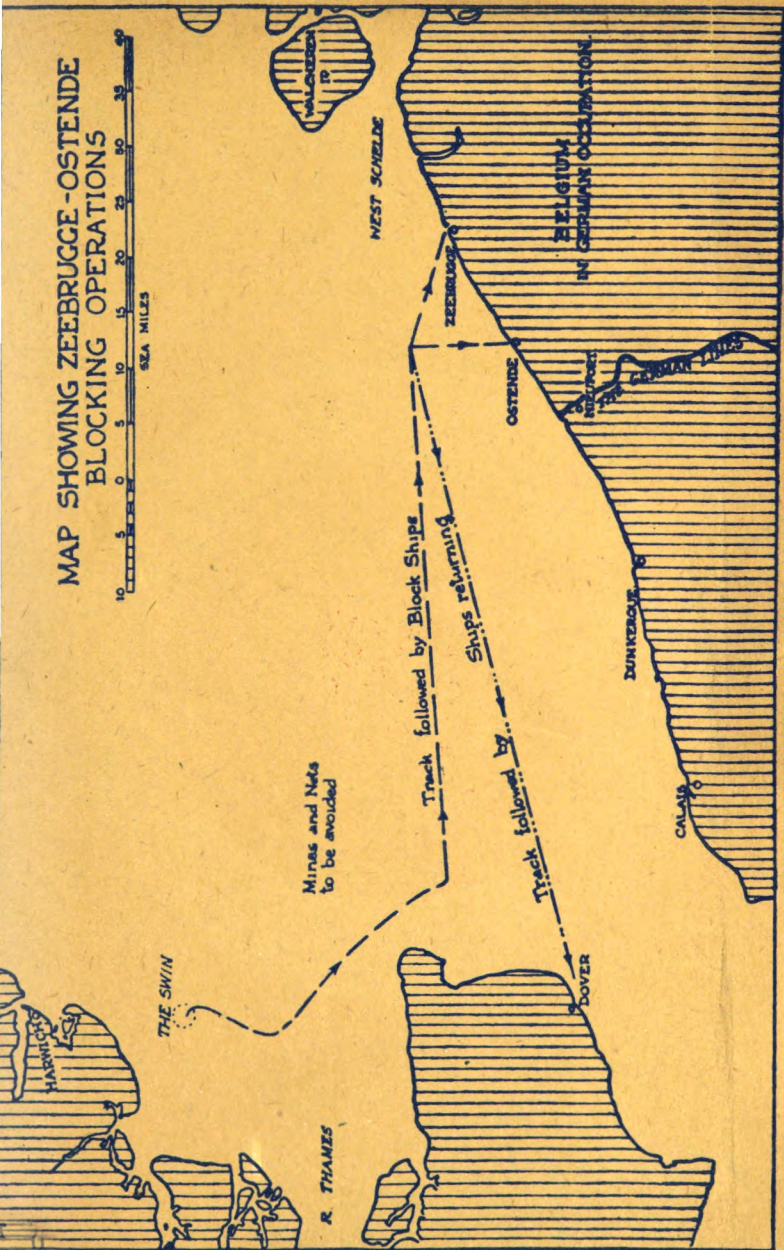
The
Immortal Story of
**ZEEBRUGGE
& OSTEND**



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MAP SHOWING ZEEBRUGGE-OSTENDE BLOCKING OPERATIONS



The IMMORTAL STORY OF ZEEBRUGGE & OSTEND

BY
H. C. FERRABY

AUTHOR OF
"THE IMPERIAL BRITISH NAVY"

By Appointment



to H.M. the King

GIEVES
PUBLISHING
COMPANY
LTD.

By Appointment



to H.R.H. the Prince of Wales

JOHN HOGG
13 PATERNOSTER ROW
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CONTENTS

	PAGE
CHAPTER I. THE PREPARATION	5
„ II. THE ATTACK	12
„ III. THE WITHDRAWAL	21
„ IV. OSTEND	31
„ V. HEROES OF THE NIGHT	41

DIAGRAMS AND ILLUSTRATIONS

MAP WITH TRACK OF BLOCKSHIPS.

(Inside of front cover.)

1. H.M.S. <i>INDICTIVE</i> AFTER THE ZEEBRUGGE RAID.	4
2. PLAN OF THE MOLE	9
3. ONE OF THE FIVE SIMILAR BLOCKSHIPS: <i>THETIS</i> , <i>INTREPID</i> , <i>IPHIGENIA</i> , <i>BRILLIANT</i> , AND <i>SIRIUS</i>	14
4. A DESTROYER PRODUCING A SMOKE-SCREEN	19
5. A MOTOR LAUNCH. RESCUER OF BLOCKSHIPS' CREWS, AND SMOKE-SCREEN LAYER	24
6. C.M.B. (COASTAL MOTOR BOAT). A SMOKE-SCREEN LAYER, AND TORPEDOER OF ENEMY'S SHIPS	29
7. THE BLOCKSHIPS IN ZEEBRUGGE, AS SEEN FROM A HEIGHT OF 20,000 FEET	34
8. PART OF THE MOLE, AS SEEN FROM A HEIGHT OF 20,000 FEET	39

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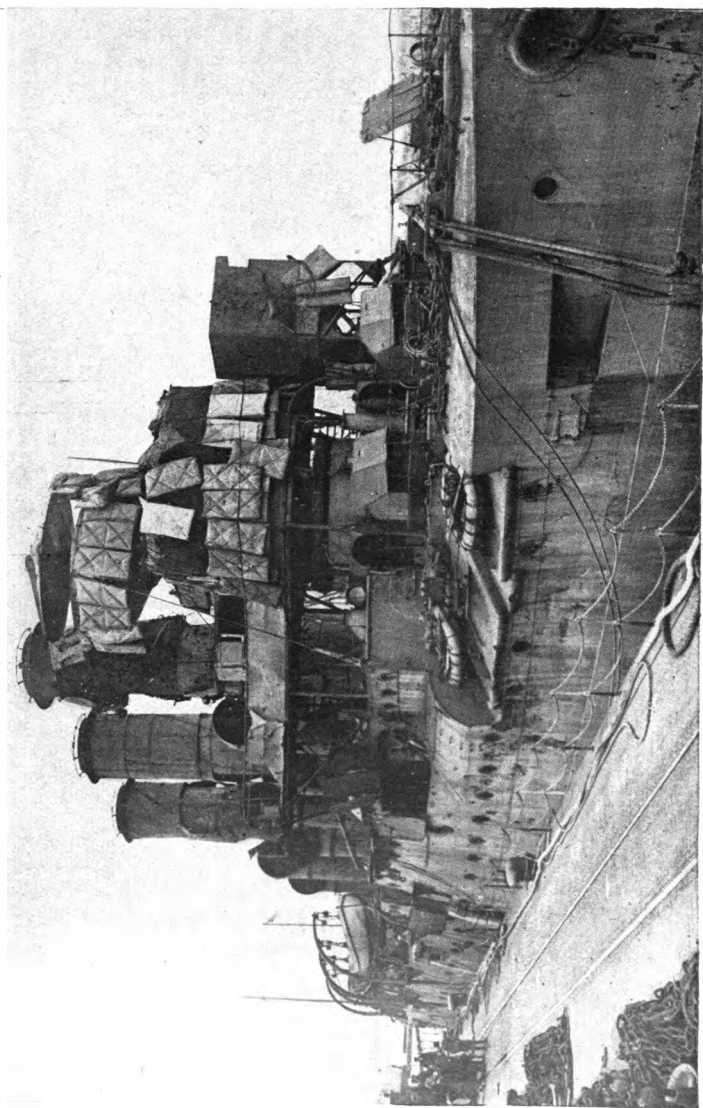
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FOREWORD

THE following pages have been written and issued under the sanction of the Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty, in order to provide a brief account in the fewest possible words of exactly what happened at Zeebrugge and Ostend on St George's Day, 1918.

Those who visit the scenes of these heroic actions will gain from this book a clearer grasp of the events of the night than can be gathered by the inexpert from the many stories that have been told, and the many reports circulated, in addition to the official despatches of the incidents of the two engagements.



H.M.S. *VINDICTIVE* AFTER THE ZEEBRUGGE RAID

THE IMMORTAL STORY OF ZEEBRUGGE AND OSTEND

CHAPTER I

THE PREPARATION

"VOLUNTEERS are wanted for an undertaking of real danger."

That was the message that was circulated confidentially in the British Navy in the winter of 1917-18. No one knew what the undertaking was, but up in the cold mists of Scapa Flow the men of the Grand Fleet welcomed it as a relief from the monotony of high-sea cruising with no enemy in sight; men from Portsmouth and Plymouth, too, came forward in hundreds; the young Royal Australian Navy was ready to take part in it to a man. The only difficulty the authorities had was to pick the 2000 officers and men they

6 ZEEBRUGGE AND OSTEND

wanted from the 200,000 they could have had.

When they were picked, the volunteers were drafted to a secret training centre, and when they found among the body a large percentage of Royal Marines (the soldiers of the sea service), most of them guessed that a landing operation of some kind was in view, and most of them guessed at some operation in France. The name of Zeebrugge, prominent though it was in those days, seems hardly to have suggested itself to them. And then, after some weeks of preliminary testing, the secret was confided to the whole force. If any man, married with children depending on him, felt that it was his duty to withdraw he had the chance then. There was not a single case of a man asking to be left behind. More, in one case where a ship had received orders to dispense with 33 men, a spare watch of stokers, before going into action, the men in almost a mutinous spirit told the captain that they were not going to be left out of the scrap. And they were not, for by some chance the motor launch detailed to take them off failed to get alongside before the expedition started.

Such, then, was the spirit in which the attack

THE PREPARATION

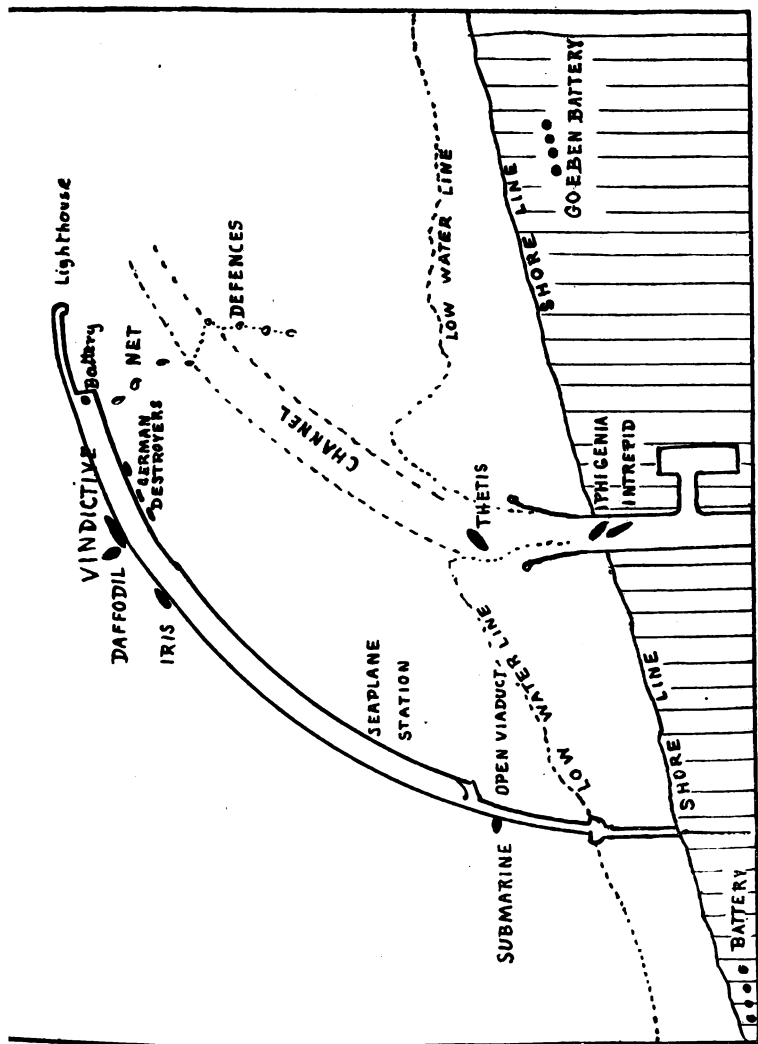
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on Zeebrugge was prepared. The marines started training on February 25, 1918, and the bluejackets on March 1. But even before that the material preparations had been put in hand. All sorts of special contrivances were required for an enterprise without parallel in the world's history. There were the special "brows" or gangways up which the Mole storming-party would have to pass from the decks of their ships. There were flame-throwers, Stokes guns, and howitzers to be added to the ships' armament. Two Mersey ferry-boats, the *Iris* and *Daffodil*, had to be taken over as auxiliaries to push the *Vindictive*, the main attacking ship, against the Mole, and to carry additional storming parties. The existing apparatus for making smoke-screens, under cover of which the expedition could approach unseen, was not useful for a night attack, since it involved a red glow at the heart of the apparatus. There was in the Dover Patrol air service one of the world's great experts in fireworks, Wing-Commander Brock. He was given a workshop in Dover Harbour, where sixty skilled ratings were put under him to carry out experiments, and he evolved the finest night smoke-screen device ever known.

8 ZEEBRUGGE AND OSTEND

Motor-launches and coastal motor-boats had to be fitted with the apparatus when it was completed. Meanwhile in Chatham Dockyard mysterious things were being done to the five old cruisers *Sirius*, *Brilliant*, *Iphigenia*, *Intrepid*, and *Thetis*. They were being prepared for the sacrifice, to be sunk in the navigable channels at Ostend and Zeebrugge as block ships. They were really the core of the whole drama. It was to help them to slip past the vigilance of German watchers that the spectacular (and even more perilous) work of the *Vindictive* was planned. And, finally, two old submarines were fitted with new gadgets to enable them also to play a novel part in the great attack. All this work was thrown on the dockyards at Chatham, Portsmouth, and Dover, in addition to the already heavy work of repairs involved by war-time work of the seagoing fleet. And it had to be done in complete secrecy. Surprise was imperative if success was to be attained.

The training of the men who were to use all this material must not be observed by anyone. The men themselves could be trusted with the secret, but some passer-by might quite innocently have set the whole tale rolling round the world. So the training was carried out where



PLAN OF THE MOLE

*

there could be no passers-by, in the lonely and unapproachable waters of the West Swin anchorage on the northern side of the Thames estuary. The old battleship *Hindustan* was used as a floating home for the storming parties, and the men had to live in very close quarters for a time, until her sister ship the *Dominion* was detailed as a second parent ship and 350 of them were transferred to her.

Finally, there was what we may call the thinking part of the expedition. The preparation of plans for such an undertaking meant the obtaining of all sorts of information. Flying men made continuous reconnaissances to get photographs of the places to be attacked in different conditions of tide. Nautical surveyors had to arrange special navigation marks, both for the passage of the ships that were to approach the coast, and for those that were to lie off and carry out long-range bombardment. Rehearsals of the rescue of the working crews from the blockships by motor-launches had to be undertaken.

For three months the work of preparation went on. Twice the conditions of weather, tide, and moon seemed favourable, and the expedition set out—only to find that the weather

THE PREPARATION

had played them false and had changed. Finally, in the late afternoon of April 22, all was ready. From various points 132 men-of-war, from monitors to motor-launches, concentrated on their given rendezvous.

CHAPTER II

THE ATTACK

To understand clearly the operation at Zeebrugge we must bear in mind the separate functions of three distinct sections of the expedition.

First, there were the *Vindictive*, *Iris*, and *Daffodil*. They were to lie alongside the Mole on the seaward side, land storming parties, do all the damage they could, attract attention to themselves, and then re-embark their men and get away.

Second, there were the blockships *Thetis*, *Intrepid*, and *Iphigenia*, which were to slip round the end of the Mole into Zeebrugge Roadstead while the Germans were occupied with the *Vindictive*, make their way to the Bruges Canal, and there sink themselves to obstruct the passage.

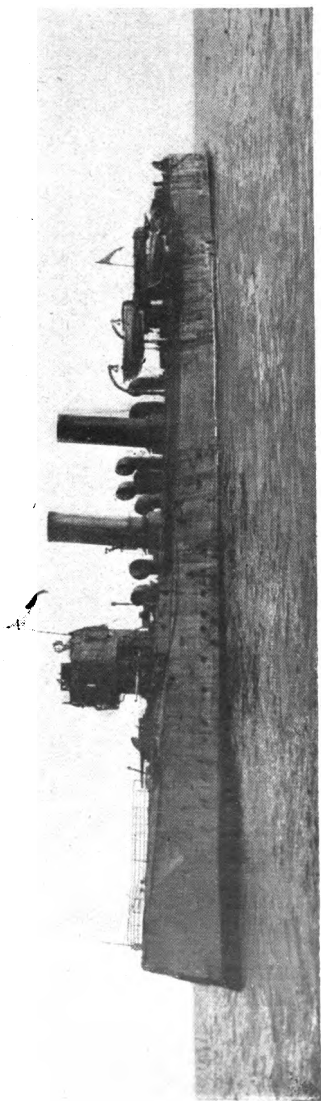
Third, there were the motor-launches and coastal motor-boats that were to lay smoke-screens in front of the oncoming expedition, to patrol the waters round the Mole, pick up survivors from sunken ships, and attack any enemy patrol craft that put out ; the monitors

THE ATTACK

that were to carry out long-range bombardment ; and destroyers that were to act as a flanking force, support the smaller craft generally, and prevent any raid on the expedition by German destroyers from the Ems Estuary.

The programme was carried out almost to the minute. The *Vindictive* was due alongside the Mole at midnight. It was 12.1 a.m. on April 23, St George's Day, as she steamed up into position, about four hundred yards nearer the shore than had been intended.

A heavy bombardment from seaward had been carried out for the preceding half-hour, and the smoke-screen had been well and truly laid. As the *Vindictive* and her escort came through it towards the Mole they were lighted up by hundreds of star shells from the German positions, and a searchlight from the end of the Mole picked them up. Fire was opened on them ; but the *Daffodil*, coming astern of the *Vindictive*, pushed against the starboard side of the cruiser with her blunt bows, and kept her pushed well in alongside, despite the heavy swell that was running. As the *Vindictive* touched, the bows were run out, and the men, carrying heavy accoutrement, bombs, Lewis guns, and the like, began to swarm along them.



ONE OF THE FIVE SIMILAR BLOCKSHIPS
(*Thetis, Intrepid, Iphigenia, Brilliant, and Sirius*)

It was a perilous task, for, apart from the fire of hostile guns, the brows were sawing to and fro with the ship's movement, and at any moment a dozen or more men might have been jerked off the narrow plank into the sea thirty feet below. Not a man slipped. Within a few minutes between three and four hundred had been landed, and, under cover of a barrage from the Stokes guns and howitzers on the *Vindictive's* deck and in her foretop, they fought their way along towards the end of the Mole where the German batteries of 5·9-inch guns were placed. As the ship herself was lying close alongside, the German guns could not hit her hull ; but they aimed at her upper works and fighting top, and two shells hit the top and put every man there save one out of action. That one was a sergeant of the R.M.A., and he kept on firing his one little gun until he could not work it any longer owing to his wounds. The foremost 7·5-inch howitzer's crew of marines was wiped out. A naval crew from a 6-inch gun took its place, and was almost wiped out. At that time the ship's upper works were being hit every few seconds, and the splinters flying around were causing many casualties. Only those who stood on the decks of the *Vindictive* after the

fight, who saw the burst sand-bags, the oozy mud of blood and sand that lay ankle deep, the torn rent woodwork and steel plating, can form a real mind picture of those twenty minutes during which the ship bore the brunt of the enemy's attack. Then his attention was diverted. The blockships were seen rounding the lighthouse and making for their objective across the roadstead on the other side of the Mole.

The *Thetis* led the way. The batteries, having picked her up, concentrated their fire on her, but a motor launch boldly swept up alongside, and her captain bellowed a direction to the cruiser's navigator through a megaphone. The *Thetis* passed on, followed by the *Intrepid* and the *Iphigenia*. The leading ship, feeling her way into the channel, ran into the nets between the two end buoys, and her propeller was entangled. But she had cleared the way for the others, and she signalled them to pass on towards the canal entrance. For herself, she drifted shoreward and grounded. All the guns were concentrated on her, so the *Intrepia* passed almost unnoticed up to the canal entrance, and, her captain having laid her across the fairway, and given the order for his crew to take to the boats, the charges in her hold

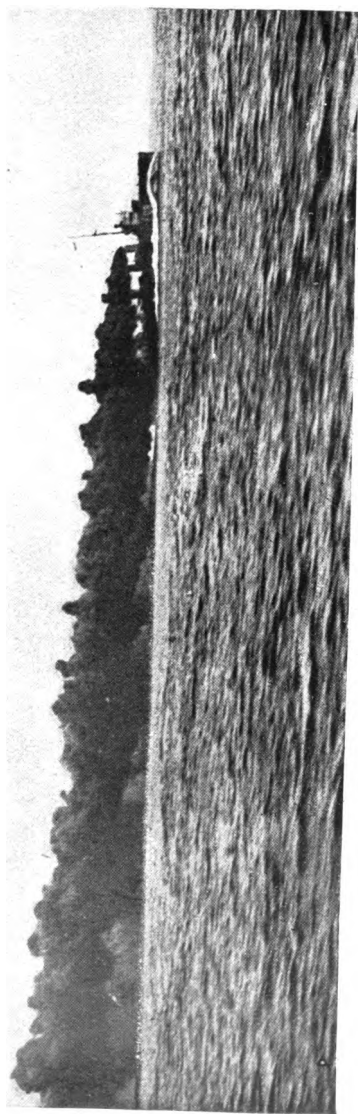
were blown and she sank. The *Iphigenia* went into the canal entrance like a bull at a gate. She carved her way through a barge and a dredger, colliding with the already sinking *Intrepid*, drew clear, got into position across the fairway, grounded, and then her captain blew his charges too, and the ship went down.

The puzzled Germans were getting it on all sides. A third, and most puzzling, attack had developed at the shoreward end of the Mole at about the same time that the first of the block-ships drew their attention at the seaward end. The German guards on shore saw a submarine making for the piles on which the viaduct from the land to the beginning of the Mole rested. It was a brief glimpse in the light of a star shell, and it may well have puzzled them. They knew that the way between the piles was closed by steel netting. It looked as though the submarine were walking into an obvious trap.

It was the enemy who were trapped. C1 and C3 had been detailed to blow up that viaduct, to prevent reliefs being rushed along the Mole to overwhelm the British landing party. The two craft were towed to within a short distance of their objective, but C1 parted the tow and missed the chance. C3 pushed on. She was

fitted with a special gyro-control in order that her crew might send her alone on the last lap of her run, while they escaped in a motor-skiff. They disdained such safety. They stayed on board till the submarine had run right in between two of the piers, and had wedged herself well in among the girders, and then they went off in the skiff while the time-bomb worked on her cargo of explosives. They were only a couple of hundred yards away when the explosion took place. A gap of a hundred feet was blown in the viaduct ; all the Germans who were standing there, machine-gunning and waiting to take the foolish crew of the submarine prisoners, went up with it, and the little garrison of the enemy at the lighthouse end of the Mole was effectually isolated.

Masses of debris fell all round the motor-skiff, but it was not hit. Bad luck enough had already come its way. The propeller was damaged, and the two officers and four men had to paddle it away as best they could. One after another they were wounded by machine-gun fire from the shore ; but as one was knocked out, another, officer or man, took up the paddle, and they dug out for dear life. Somewhere in the offing they knew there was help. A picket



A DESTROYER PRODUCING A SMOKE-SCREEN

boat had been detailed to stand by to pick them up, "as requisite," in the delightfully pedantic naval phrase. The picket boat was under a lieutenant-commander—a most unusual thing, for a midshipman is the usual captain of such a small craft. But the case was unusual. For the lieutenant-commander's name was Sandford, and the name of the lieutenant who led C₃ to her noisy end was also Sandford. Brother was standing by brother. The picket boat found them in the end, and ran them, at the full power of her engines, out of range, to transfer them to the ward-room of the destroyer *Phæbe*, where the wounded were attended to.

CHAPTER III

THE WITHDRAWAL

THE aim of the expedition, the successful sinking of the blockships in the entrance to the canal, had been achieved three-quarters of an hour after the *Vindictive* first slid alongside the Mole. The operations there were subsidiary. If demolition of enemy works could be effected, well and good. If not, the success of the undertaking was not impaired. The great thing was to block the mouth of the canal so that U-boats could not get out.

“Nothing but a useless sacrifice of life could have followed if the three boarding vessels had remained by the Mole any longer,” said Captain Carpenter, of the *Vindictive*, who was the senior naval officer on the spot and thus responsible for any decision to curtail the programme time. So at 12.50 a.m. he told the captain of the *Daffodil* to make a recall signal with his syren, for the *Vindictive*'s searchlights (which should have given the warning) and her syren were all shot to pieces. Through the noise of the guns and the fighting the piercing

wail of the syren swept, and the withdrawal began.

The position at that moment was dramatic.

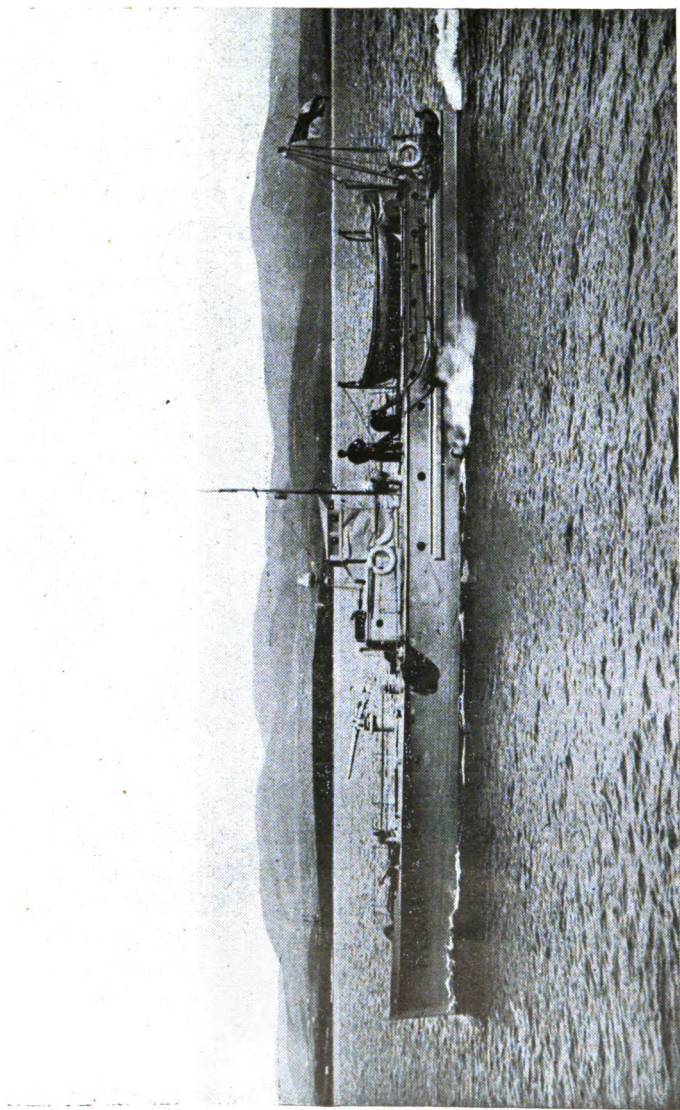
The *Vindictive* had drawn up alongside the Mole 400 yards nearer the shore than was planned, with the result that the task of the storming parties, who had to silence, if possible, the batteries at the sea end of the Mole and also to hold a fortified zone between the land and the *Vindictive* against reinforcements from the shore, was complicated, and in the upshot made impossible. So was the work of the demolition party that followed the storming parties to blow up sheds and any enemy material that could be got at. Fierce fighting had been going on along the sea end of the Mole, between the greatly reduced companies of seamen and marines and the enemy guards who were strongly posted with machine-guns. The guns of the German destroyers on the other side of the Mole were also brought into use and made particularly hazardous the work of getting on board again, across the reduced number of brows that still sawed and swayed along the exposed edge of the parapet.

Even the attainment of the parapet itself from the main platform of the Mole, fifteen

feet below, was hampered by the fire, as it destroyed several of the scaling ladders that had been fixed. The retiring forces gathered in the shelter of a shed that should have been demolished, but fortunately was not, and rushed in small batches for the ladders and the parapet between the bursts of enemy fire.

At five minutes past one it was reported to Captain Carpenter that all the men of the storming parties with all the wounded who could be moved were on board. He hung on another five minutes, but no one else appeared ; and the *Daffodil*, which for more than an hour had been shoving the *Vindictive* against the Mole, with about double the normal steam pressure in her gauges, began to tow the cruiser's head off, ready for the retirement.

Meanwhile, we have lost sight of the *Daffodil's* sister ship the *Iris*. Her experience was a bitter one. The swell alongside, which only made the brows of the heavier *Vindictive* saw the edge of the Mole, tossed the ferry-boat up and down like a cork. Two officers were shot as they endeavoured to grapple her alongside with mole-anchors ; their sacrifice was in vain, for the anchors, even when fixed, would not hold, and the *Iris* ultimately crept away from the Mole



A MOTOR-LAUNCH
Rescuer of Blockships' Crews and Smoke-Screen Layer

in order to lie alongside the *Vindictive* and land her party across the cruiser's deck. Only a few men, however, had passed from one ship to another when the *Daffodil's* syren shrilled out the recall. The troubles of the *Iris* were by no means over. As the little force steamed away, the German gunners found her range. Two large shells and ten small ones plunged into her, and the first one mortally wounded her commander and seriously wounded her navigator, who nevertheless, lying amid the debris of the bridge, continued to navigate her away from the Mole, with the help of the coxswain, who steered with one hand, and held an electric torch to light the chart with the other. The command of the ship was subsequently taken over by another lieutenant; but further casualties occurred on her tightly packed decks as shell after shell dropped into her. It was a motor-launch that put an end to the massacre. She gallantly dashed in behind the stricken *Iris* and laid a thick smoke-screen to hide her from the German gunners. Both the commander and the navigator died of wounds.

The motor-launch contingent, indeed, had been ubiquitous in the past half-hour. It is difficult to convey a comprehensive impression

of their gallantry ; but a few instances, all of which occurred practically simultaneously, may stimulate the imagination to reconstruct the scene.

Several of them went into the roadstead, before and behind the blockships : some to lay lights as an aid to navigation, others to pick up the crews from the sunken ships. One of them, with a normal complement of 18, came out of the roadstead with 101 people on board in addition to her own volunteer crew. She had gone right up to the entrance to the canal with the *Iphigenia* and *Intrepid*. There was a storm of shrapnel and machine-gun bullets sweeping round, but the M.L. hung on, picking up one skiff-load after another of the escaping men. Finally, she rescued some men who were drifting about on a Carley raft, but overlooked the captain of the *Intrepid*, who was also on the raft. He managed to grasp hold of a rope's end, and was towed through the water, clinging to it as the M.L. made a dash for the open sea. He was seen, however, and hauled on board. The difficulties of the position were added to by a breakdown of the steering gear, and the M.L. had to be manœuvred by her engines only, and with them the captain took his little overladen craft so

close under the seaward end of the Mole that the enemy guns could not be depressed enough to hit him. Another M.L. at the same time embarked 60 officers and men from the *Thetis*, so that of the 180 volunteers who went into the dragon's mouth, with a chance of escape that Sir Roger Keyes himself described as "very slender," by far the greater proportion were brought back by the devotion and heroism of the M.L. men.

Inside the Mole, too, there were smaller craft still, the coastal motor-boats. There were seventeen of them buzzing about, and one, C.M.B. 5, sighted an enemy destroyer under way—one of the few that moved that night—and torpedoed her; while C.M.B. 7 hit another destroyer lying alongside the Mole with a torpedo under the forebridge; and yet another torpedoed the famous *Brussels*, then a German prize, being used as a torpedo-school ship in the harbour. Another went up to within seventy yards of the seaplane sheds on the Mole and bombarded them with his little automatic gun. And yet others, still within the danger zone, but not able themselves to take part in the fighting, laid and kept going a layer of smoke-screens across the harbour entrance. One of these C.M.B's. had an adven-

ture which typifies the whole spirit of that youthful service. She set out with the rest of the expedition from Dover ; but, after going 18 miles, her propellers fouled an obstruction, and she had to be towed back to Dover by a drifter. She got into the dockyard at 8 p.m., and, in response to her young captain's eager request, she was immediately hauled up, and the propellers cleared. There was other damage as well, and it was 9.40 before she was in the water again. She was due to take her place among the smoke-screen layers at 11.30 off Zeebrugge, 70 miles away. She was there at 11.50, and kept on the patrol for an hour, under heavy battery fire from Blankenberghe.

The British loss in the attack was small, in so far as the ships were concerned. The supporting destroyers that were covering the work of the smoke-layers inshore were under heavy fire from guns of all calibres at short range, but only one of them came to grief. This was the *North Star*, which lost her way during the retirement in a smoke-screen and emerged suddenly inside the roadstead. She saw some enemy ships alongside the Mole, and loosed off all her torpedoes at them ; but at the same time the German batteries found her, and fired at almost point-blank range.



A COASTAL MOTOR-BOAT

A Smoke-Screen Layer and Torpedoer of Enemy's Ships

The flare-up attracted the attention of another destroyer, the *Phæbe*, which went to the rescue, trying to lay a smoke-screen round the disabled *North Star* and attempting to tow her away. The fire was so intense that the hawser was shot through, and in the end the *North Star* had to be abandoned, though her commanding officer would not leave the bridge until he had been twice ordered by a senior officer to do so, as his ship was obviously sinking beneath him.

The expedition wound its way back slowly to Dover from the scene of the exploit. The star shells and the searchlights on the startled coast died down. The guns fell silent. Limping, the *Vindictive*, her funnels riddled, her upper works shattered, her bridge a tangled mass of iron work, reached Dover Harbour at 8 a.m. The crumpled *Iris*, with her dead captain still on board, crawled even more slowly home, and it was 2.45 before she reached harbour. And there the Zeebrugge men, all agog with excitement at their own success, heard the tidings of what had befallen the other section of the expedition that had made for Ostend to block the fairway between the piers into the harbour there.

CHAPTER IV

OSTEND

THERE was no storming party at Ostend. And there were only two blockships, the *Sirius* and *Brilliant*. Otherwise the plans were similar. The motor-launches and coastal motor-boats were to lay smoke-screens and navigation lights in advance of the main body. Destroyers were to sweep to and fro in support, French destroyers covering the bombarding monitors. And motor-launches were to follow the blockships to the pier and bring off their crews.

The plan miscarried, owing to a chance that could not be foreseen. The Germans, all unwarned though they were of the impending attack, had chosen that particular time to shift the Stroom Bank buoy some distance to the eastward of its normal position. That buoy was the essential navigational mark for hitting off the entrance between the piers. When the blockships picked it up, they turned for the shore, as was natural, the smoke-screen having been carried in the wrong direction by a shift of the wind ten minutes before they arrived,

and they consequently stranded some 2400 yards east of the easternmost pier.

It was a bitter disappointment, but all carried on boldly with the rescue work, as planned, and the two M.L.'s that picked up most of the crews of the stranded blockships brought them back to harbour safely through a heavy, but fortunately, not accurate fire without a single man being wounded.

The others, including several of the engine-room complement of the *Sirius*, were crowded together in a whaler. They were off an enemy's coast, with star shells making the night as light as day, craft of all sorts careering about at high speed, and the air humming with shell and shrapnel. Undaunted, they pulled away and went on pulling, hour after hour, until they had covered fifteen miles of the hundred that separated them from their base. Then they were sighted by one of the supporting ships and rescued.

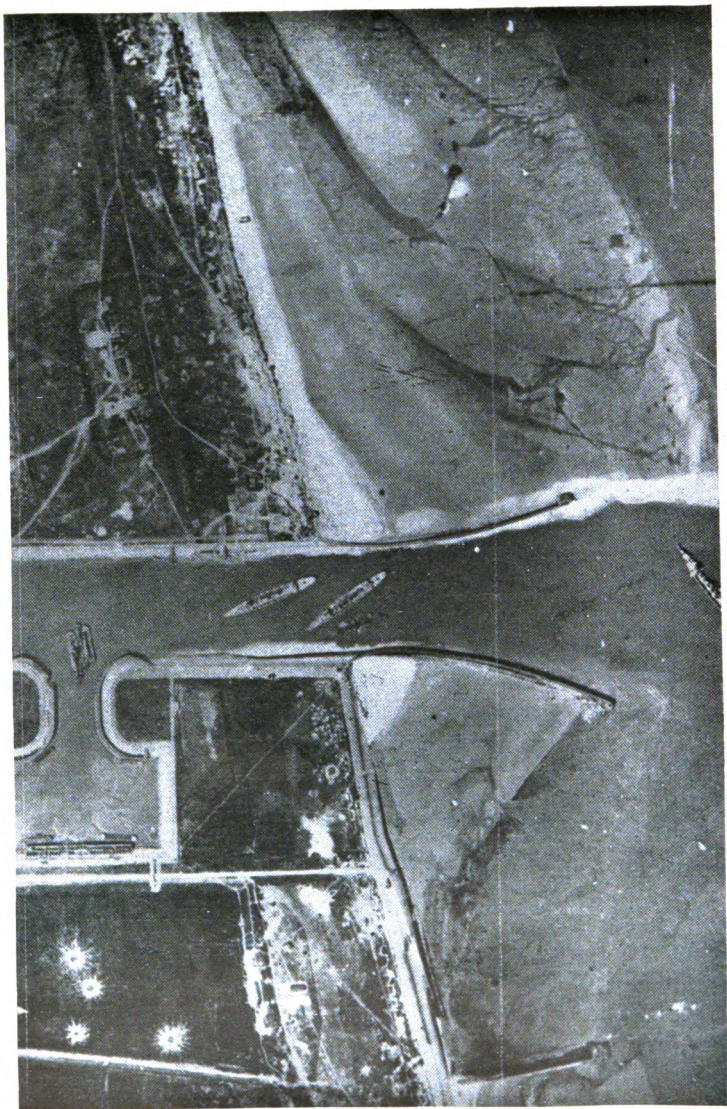
As soon as they reached their base, the two captains of the blockships went to the Commodore and begged for another blockship apiece to have a second try.

It was obvious that the work could not be left uncompleted. Zeebrugge might be sealed ;

but so long as Ostend was open there was still a backway out for the U-boats from their nest at Bruges, by way of the inland canals. Tide and darkness would still favour another attack up to April 27. Four days remained for preparation, and by a dramatic stroke the *Vindictive* was selected for the second sacrifice. Dockyard hands and soldiers were set to work filling cement into bags, and two hundred tons were put in the ship's after magazines and upper bunkers on both sides. She was ready ; but the weather had turned rough, and the attempt had to be postponed to the next dark period, in the first fortnight of May.

The delay enabled the expedition to be strengthened by the addition of a second block-ship, the *Sappho*, a sister of the unlucky *Brilliant* and *Sirius*. Chatham Dockyard did the work in her, and delivered her a few hours before the time for starting. Then Fate played another card. She had scarcely left the anchorage on her way to Ostend when a man-hole joint in the side of her boiler blew out. It reduced her speed to six knots, and there was no hope that she could reach the objective in time to be of use.

It could hardly be hoped that a second attack



THE BLOCKSHIPS IN ZEEBRUGGE

As seen from a height of 20,000 feet

on Ostend would be carried out with as little interference as the first. Enemy destroyers had been reported cruising in the offing, and it was certain that the shore-guard would be on the alert. The navigational difficulties that had led to the first failure were studied, and several alternatives for guiding the blockships into the entrance on the next attack were perfected, so that the chance of losing the channel was reduced to a minimum. It was well this was done, for while the ships were already on their way to the attack a daring air reconnaissance established the fact that all the buoys off Ostend appeared to have been removed entirely.

The advanced guard of motor-launches and coastal motor-boats were to start their smoke-laying at 1.30. Ten minutes later through the smoke the *Vindictive* advanced to the position of the old Stroom Bank buoy, where a calcium flare, hidden from the shore by the smoke-screen, was burning, and immediately afterwards the signal was given to the supporting monitors to open fire. There had been no preliminary bombardment. The whole thing was timed to work simultaneously. And as the shells sped towards the German fortifications two motor-boats slipped through the smoke screen, and,

running at the pier-heads, torpedoed them, and swung away again. That was the moment that Nature chose to take a hand in the proceedings. A thick, but local, patch of fog swept down off shore and added to the artificial fog. The *Vindictive*, steaming between two lanes of prepared smoke for her objective, found her vision unexpectedly obscured. Course was altered, and she promenaded at nine knots up and down about a cable's length (200 yards) out from the pier-heads. Finally, as she meandered along, the captain saw, in a break in the mist, the entrance and one of her motor-boat escorts. She signalled "last resort," and the daring plan was then adopted of placing in the very centre of the channel a flare giving 1,000,000 candle-power light. The *Vindictive* steamed straight for it, while a fiercer inferno of gun-fire of all calibres broke out from the German positions, and swept across her decks. Her unhealed wounds from Zeebrugge were pin-scratches compared to the battering she had at Ostend in those few minutes while first her captain, and then, when he was killed and her navigator wounded, the next officer tried to lay her right athwart the channel, between the two piers.

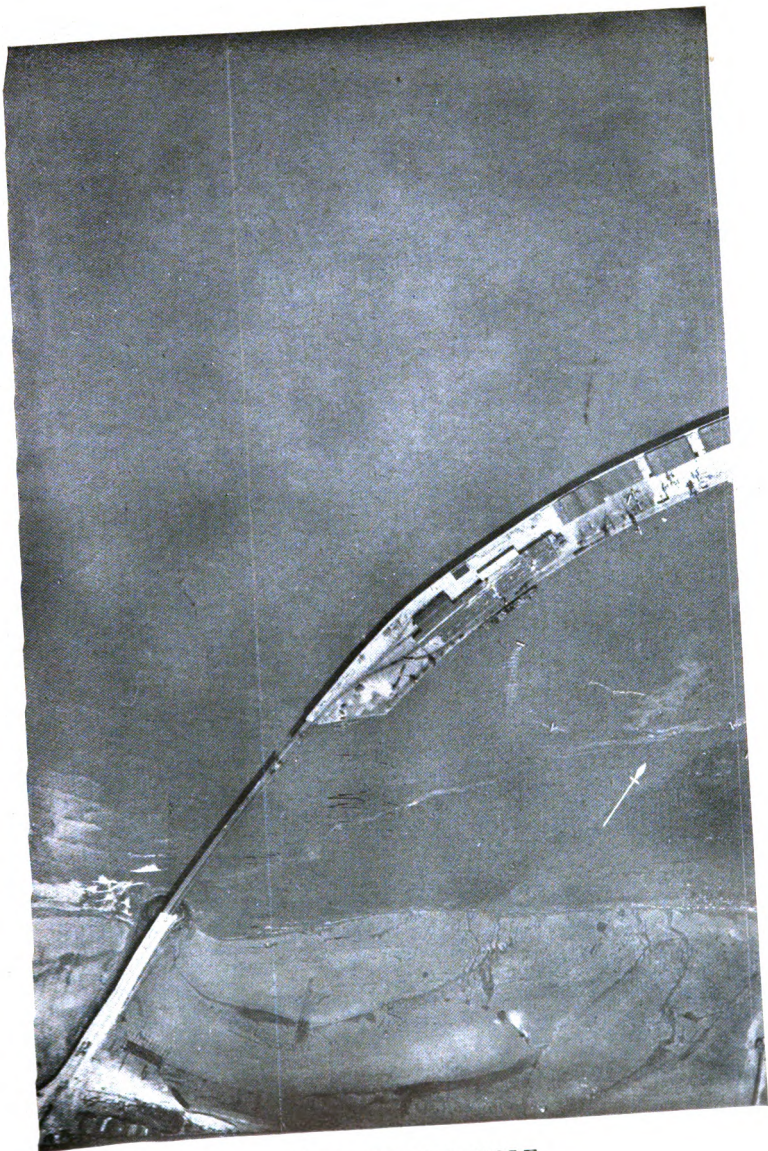
Her battered bows were against the eastern

pier, but her stern had not swung round enough. Her port engine was ordered full speed astern to help in swinging her ; but the port propeller had been damaged as she left the Mole at Zeebrugge, and was not much help. She stuck across the channel at an angle of 40 degrees, and could not be moved any more. So the order was passed to the engine-room for all hands to save themselves, and the engineer-officer blew the main charges, while auxiliary charges in the forward 6-inch magazine were blown from the bridge.

There were deeds of great bravery in those few hell-fire minutes while the ship was being abandoned. A petty officer found the navigator wounded on the debris of the bridge and carried him down aft under heavy machine-gun fire. The officer was wounded again, and fell over the side into the water. A motor-launch was alongside the sunken *Vindictive*, raked by machine-gun fire, in the narrow channel between the two piers, her first lieutenant and a deck-hand killed, her coxswain and her captain wounded, and her fragile hull battered. Two officers and 37 men of the *Vindictive* were embarked, and the M.L., heavily laden, leaking, and still under fierce fire, backed at what speed

she could out of the inferno, and into the sheltering fog. When she tried to go ahead her damaged forecastle flooded, and the water had to be kept down by bailing with buckets as well as by pumps, and all unwanted hands had to muster aft to keep her bow out of the water as much as possible. And to add to her plight, she missed, in the fog, the first line of patrolling destroyers who could have rescued her sorely-beset occupants. She plugged on until 3.15 a.m., sending S.O.S. signals out by a flashing lamp into the mist, and then was picked up by, of all ships, the *Warwick*, in which Sir Roger Keyes was personally covering the operation.

Meanwhile another little drama had been played in the bullet-swept channel where the *Vindictive* was settling down for her long blockade. A second motor-launch had dashed up alongside the wreck after the first one withdrew, spitting machine-gun bullets at both piers as she went. Her complement shouted and called up to the ship, to know if anyone was left on board. There was no answer. Yet the captain of the M.I. hung on, guided by some instinct. Suddenly amid the scream of the shells and bullets he heard a human voice, and a few moments later the wounded navigator of the



PART OF THE MOLE
As seen from a height of 20,000 feet

Vindictive, who had fallen into the water, was seen, clinging to an overturned skiff, with two equally badly wounded ratings. They were picked up, and the M.L., holed in fifty-five places, once by a 6-inch shell, her speed seriously reduced, two of her crew killed, and others wounded, crept out of the narrow channel, and limped away into the fog. She ultimately fell in with a monitor, who towed her back to Dunkirk.

There were other fine deeds done that night by small craft ; but for impudence the fight put up by C.M.B. 22, in which the senior officer of the C.M.B. flotilla was carried, takes the palm. She was carrying out her smoke-screening off the shore batteries, when she encountered, close inshore, an enemy torpedo-boat, who switched on her searchlight and opened fire. The coastal motor-boat had no torpedo, but she carried Lewis guns, and with those she peppered the torpedo-boat, ten times her size, so vigorously that the enemy was driven away from the harbour entrance, and prevented from interfering with the *Vindictive's* approach.

CHAPTER V

HEROES OF THE NIGHT

It is the custom of the British Navy to avoid self-advertisement. Partly for that reason few names of officers and men have been mentioned hitherto in this chronicle, though the omission of names was also dictated by a desire to keep the narrative as simple and unconfused as possible, and a mass of unfamiliar proper names does confuse.

The story of Zeebrugge cannot be told anonymously, though. There are men's names that must come into it—Carpenter, Halahan, Godsal, Elliot, Cordner, Bury, Dean, Drummond, Brock—a score or more leap to the lips at once. And so, to conclude our story, we will turn to individual feats, and in a few snapshot paragraphs depict a part—it cannot be all—of the heroic deeds of the night.

Captain ALFRED CARPENTER, R.N., the captain of the *Vindictive* at Zeebrugge, and one of the staff officers who drew up all the plans for the assault. It was by the unanimous

vote of all the officers who served under him that he was awarded the V.C.

Commander A. E. GODSAL, R.N., commanded the *Brilliant* at Ostend on April 23, and was appointed to command the *Vindictive* for the attempt on May 10. Having placed his ship between the piers of Ostend Harbour, he left the shelter of the conning-tower to see better while he manœuvred her into the required position, and was killed at once by shell fire.

Captain EDWARD BAMFORD, R.M.L.I., landed on the Mole with three platoons of the Marine Storming Force, established the necessary fortified zone on the right of the disembarkation, and led an assault on the battery to the left.

Sergt. N. A. FINCH, R.M.A., the Marine sergeant who worked his gun single-handed in the fighting top of the *Vindictive* alongside the Mole, as recounted on page 15.

Lieut. P. T. DEAN, R.N.V.R., commanding officer of the M.L. that rescued the crews of the *Intrepid* and *Iphigenia* from the canal entrance, as recounted on page 26.

Lieut. H. G. CAMPBELL, R.N., commanding the *Daffodil*, who was wounded in the eye early

in the attack, but stuck to his post until the force had safely withdrawn.

Chaplain the Rev. C. J. E. PESHALL, R.N., who did almost superhuman work in carrying wounded from the Mole over the brows into the *Vindictive* under heavy fire.

Artificer Engineer W. M. SUTTON, the man who kept 160 lbs. pressure of steam in the *Daffodil's* boilers, so that she should push the *Vindictive* firmly against the Mole, and who dealt with such matters as two compartments being flooded by the engine-room being holed as though they were trifles.

Acting Art. Eng. W. H. EDGAR, R.A.N., who worked for seventeen hours without rest in the engine-room and boiler-room of the *Iris*, and brought her back to Dover under her own steam despite all her injuries.

P.O. 1st Cl. E. G. YOULTON, who steered the *Vindictive* alongside the Mole, and remained with Captain Carpenter throughout. A bursting shell set fire to a pile of boxes containing fused Stokes bombs, and he averted a catastrophe by stamping on the burning parts and putting the fire out.

Eng.-Com. W. A. BURY, R.N., the hero of the *Vindictive* on both her trips. It is a remarkable thing that the official despatches on the

first attack do not mention him at all, but that his work was appreciated is shown by the fact that when the second attempt on Ostend was mooted Commander Bury's representations that he and his old engine-room staff must accompany her because they understood the engines was at once agreed to. They knew what it meant, for at Zeebrugge they had a bad time in the engine-room, and for a time had to work in gas masks—and Ostend was likely to be worse. His own account of the last moments below is : "The engines were left running full astern port, half ahead starboard. I waited in the engine-room till each petty officer reported his part cleared, and then went up myself. There was a fearful din on the upper deck as well as shrapnel ; the machine-gun bullets were making a noise like pneumatic caulkers." Amid that inferno he calmly walked aft to fire the after mines, which had not been done, as those responsible for them had been wiped out. Then he got down the sea gangway and into a cutter, from which he transhipped to the M.L.

In years to come surely this story will be the immortal epic of the Navy during the Great War — how Eng.-Com. Bury, Engine-Room Artificers Herbert Cavanagh, Herbert Alfred

Harris, Norman Carroll, and Alan Thomas demanded their right to take the *Vindictive* on its second venture against Ostend. Remember, these men had to face not only the enemy's fire when abandoning the ship in little overcrowded motor-launches ; but also during the journeys, both there and back, they were faced with the possibility of striking a mine, to which their lives would pay first toll of any in the ship with little possibility of the escape open to those above. Surely few more nerve-racking ordeals can be encountered. That their nerves were in regular stout condition is more than proved by the perfect way in which the men in the engine-room and stokeholds went about their work, and amid that mass of machinery everything worked with the same perfection as when the *Vindictive* ran her maiden trip in peace time.

Cavanagh and Harris were wounded, and Thomas was reported missing and later found to be a prisoner of war—all were mercifully spared to the nation, and are living examples to coming generations.

Captain H. C. HALAHAN, R.N., Lieut.-Col. B. N. ELLIOT, R.M., and Major A. A. CORDNER, who were killed at the head of their landing-parties, were the three officers who trained their men

in the art of storming enemy positions, who instilled into them that certainty of success which made it possible for the whole operation to be carried through like clockwork, although within a minute of the *Vindictive* coming alongside the Mole the leaders were killed. It was then that the value of their long weeks of training and work was proved. They were taken ; but their spirit remained, and led the men across the brows and into the inferno of machine-gun bullets that swept the Mole.

Wing-Commander F. A. BROCK was the head of the Dover Experimental Station, where the indispensable smoke-screen apparatus was invented. He was killed on the Mole, where he had landed, not only to fight with the volunteer flame-thrower men of his party, but also to endeavour to capture a German range-finder. In the midst of the inferno on the Mole Commander Brock was still devoured by his ruling passion of scientific investigation.

Lieut. GRAHAM S. HEWETT, R.N.V.R., was Commander Brock's right-hand man, was with him throughout, and left in command of the smoke-screen, flame-thrower, and rocket parties in the *Vindictive*. Many of the gallant men of this party landed on the Mole—among

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them Air-Mechanic W. H. Gough, who took a heavy flame-thrower ashore with the R.M.L.I. party, crossed the Mole, and beat back a detachment from one of the German destroyers who were coming up with a machine-gun. Others of the Experimental Base detachment, who were all enlisted originally for non-combatant duties but volunteered for the fighting front at Zeebrugge, went on the Mole with flame-throwers, guns, and phosphorus grenades. One of them, Air-Mechanic Ryan, was able to destroy a German gun-emplacement with his bombs. Four men of the detachment were killed; and twelve wounded, and they all carried out their duties with the utmost gallantry.

Commander Brock and Lieut. Hewett's personalities were such that these gallant mechanics would have followed them into the darkest valley of death—and through it.

Lieut. G. H. DRUMMOND, R.N.V.R., commanded M.L. 254, whose bravery at Ostend is described on page 37.

Lieut. ROLAND BOURKE, R.N.V.R., commanded M.L. 276, whose work is also described on page 38.

Lieut. A. DAYRELL-REED, R.N.R., and Lieut.

48 ZEEBRUGGE AND OSTEND

A. L. POLAND, R.N., commanded the two C.M.B.'s that torpedoed the pier ends at Ostend (page 36).

Scores of other instances could be picked out from the official honours list,¹ without counting the incidents that went unrecorded officially. The number of decorations given for each attack is shown in the following table :—

	April 23.	May 10.
V.C.	6	3
C.B.	1
C.M.G.	2	1
D.S.O.	20	5
Bar to D.S.O.	1	3
D.S.C.	27	9
Bar to D.S.C.	2	2
C.G.M.	16	2
D.S.M.	140	60
Bar to D.S.M.	3	4

The casualties are shown in the following table :—

	April 23	May 10.
Killed	176	8
Wounded	412	30
Missing	94	11

(35 believed killed) (all believed killed).

¹ Albert M'Kenzie, Able Seaman, an *Arethusa* boy (see last page of cover), received the V.C. by vote of his shipmates in H.M.S. *Vindictive*.

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"Vindictive" at Zeebrugge and one of them
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the D.S.M. Many, too, were in the engagements
in the North Sea, Falkland Islands and elsewhere.
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